

CONNECTICUT STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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TO: Adult Education Directors
Federal Funded Grantees
Cooperating Eligible Entities

FROM: Paul F. Flinter, Chief

DATE: January 17, 2006

SUBJECT: Adult Education Operational Memorandum # 03-06

- Statewide Policy Forum
- Basic Skill Competency for Graduation
- Extension of the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, Title II of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA)
- Federal Adult Education Funding for Fiscal Year 2007
- Family Literacy Curriculum Connections
- National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL)
- Working Poor Families Report
- Student Advocacy

Statewide Policy Forum

The second statewide policy forum for Fiscal Year 2005-06 will be held on Friday, January 20, 2006 from 9:00 to 12:00 AM at the Four Points Sheraton in Meriden (for directions please click <http://www.crec.org/atdn/workshops/directions/sheraton4pts.htm>).

In addition to the routine updates, the forum will devote significant time to a discussion around ensuring that adult learners leave our programs with the basic skills necessary to further their successes in education and employment. Guest speakers from regional Workforce Investment Boards and the Connecticut Employment and Training Commission are expected to participate and share their perspectives.

No registration is necessary. We hope that a Program Facilitator will accompany you.

Basic Skill Competency for Graduation

As you know, Connecticut General Statute 10-223a (b) requires that **“On or before September 1, 2002, each local and regional board of education shall specify the basic skills necessary for graduation for classes graduating in 2006, and for each graduating class thereafter, and**

include a process to assess a student's level of competency in such skills. The Department is collecting information about the local graduation requirements from each school district. Adult high school credit diploma (AHSCD) programs are strongly recommended to become familiar with these requirements. AHSCD programs are also encouraged to have processes in place to assess the basic skills competency of students graduating in 2006 and thereafter, and to ensure that those processes are in concert with local board policy.

Extension of the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, Title II of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA)

WIA has not been reauthorized. The United States Department of Education's Office of Vocational and Adult Education has given States the authority to implement an extension and/or revision of their state plan. This action will allow the Department to extend the currently funded Program Improvement Projects one more year. However, the Department will be negotiating new performance targets for the coming year.

Federal Adult Education Funding for Fiscal Year 2007

On December 30, 2005 President Bush signed into law the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act of 2006, which provides funding for Department of Education programs for federal year FY 06. The Act resulted in level funding for Adult Education State Grants but a 1% reduction was applied in order to help pay for hurricane-related relief. The 1% reduction in Connecticut's adult education grant will not affect a program's funding level.

Family Literacy Curriculum Connections

In late November the Department, through the Capitol Region Education Council/Adult Training and Development Network, issued a solicitation for a new initiative called *Family Literacy Curriculum Connections*. The intention of the solicitation was to select ten (10) school district teams to participate in the project.

The pilot project is designed to provide an exciting opportunity to build unique collaborations between adult education programs and elementary schools, and to support family engagement in children's learning. The partnership is to target families of children in kindergarten, first and second grades and to develop take home learning activities that align with the Connecticut reading and language arts standards for the selected grade.

Thirty One (31) applications were received and underwent a review by a diverse team of readers. Ten (10) successful applicants were chosen to receive a \$5,000 mini-grant to carry out this work. Project Teams are made up of grade level teacher(s) in a selected grade (K, 1 or 2), adult educators and other school personnel such as Family Resource Center staff.

The overwhelming response makes it clear to the Department that there is an interest on the part of both the adult education and the elementary school teachers to develop new ways to help parents support their children's classroom learning. We are excited about the potential of this project and look forward to offering other related opportunities. For questions call Gail Brooks-Lemkin at (860) 807-2121 or gail.brooks-lemkin@po.state.ct.us.

National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL)

The first report of the 2003 NAAL was released on December 15, 2005. The NAAL is the nation's most comprehensive measure of English literacy among adults (age 16 and older) residing in households and prisons in the United States. Over 19,000 adults participated in the assessments from the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Results are reported in terms of scale score averages and literacy levels on three literacy scales: prose, document, and quantitative. The literacy levels are described as (i) Below Basic, (ii) Basic, (iii) Intermediate, and (iv) Proficient.

The report titled, *A First Look at the literacy of America's Adults*, reflects that the following percentages of American adults are functioning in the two lowest levels:

- 43% in prose literacy;
- 34% in document literacy; and
- 55% in quantitative literacy.

This report can be downloaded at <http://nces.ed.gov/naal/>. State level data for Connecticut will be available in the next few months.

Working Poor Families Report

A report titled *Sowing Prosperity: Low-Income Working Families and Connecticut's Economic Future* was released on January 11, 2006 at the State Capitol. Ajit Gopalakrishnan and Maureen Wagner served on the advisory committee that developed this report and provided statewide data on adult education. Connecticut's adult education system was seen as a critical component that improves the lives of working families by helping individuals acquire their high school credential and improving their basic skill levels to achieve greater employment outcomes. Several recommendations in the report have direct implications for adult education such as removal of the legislative funding cap, expansion of ESL programs, and expansion of incumbent worker education services in partnership with Departments of Labor and Higher Education. The entire report can be downloaded at <http://www.aecf.org/initiatives/fes/workingpoor/workingpoor/connecticut.pdf>.

Student Advocacy

This is an opportunity to say thank you to the many students in your program who wrote letters to elected officials about the importance of adult education. The support of adult education funding convinced elected officials in the U.S. Congress to restore funding cuts proposed by President Bush. Students deserve congratulations for their participation.

Thank you.